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Stoicism and Frankfurtian Compatibilism*

Introduction

Although the free will debate of contemporary analytic philosophy lacks almost any kind of historical perspective, some scholars[1] have pointed out a striking similarity between Stoic approaches to free will and Frankfurt's well-known hierarchical theory.[2] However, the scholarly agreement is only apparent because they disagree about the kind of similarity between the Stoic and the Frankfurtian theories. The main thesis of my paper is that so far, commentators have missed the crucial difference between the Stoics' approach to free will and Frankfurt's, a difference that makes the former the superior approach.

I will make three main claims. In the first section, I shall argue that it is misleading and ultimately false to say that Frankfurt's and the Stoics' conception of free will are the same or notably similar to each other.[3] Frankfurt has a contrafactual analysis of free will that refers to a psychological ability which is specific to humans and exercised by most people in most cases. In contrast, the Stoic considers free will as an aim for everybody that is achieved only by the sage, who can choose the option that she regards as the best one every time.

In the second section, I shall show that there is indeed a relevant similarity between the two approaches. Both of them provide a semi-compatibilist reason- and reflectivity-based theory of moral responsibility. That is, both claim that determinism is compatible with moral responsibility regardless of whether free will is compatible, because the ultimate source of moral responsibility is not freedom of the will but reflective reason.

In the third section, I shall describe the difference that I take to be the most relevant between these theories regarding the problem of moral responsibility. In order to clarify how second-order desires can be the source of moral responsibility, Frankfurt claimed that agents form these second-order desires through *exercising* reflective reason. Therefore, Frankfurt held that exercising reflectivity is at the heart of moral responsibility. By contrast, the Stoics claimed that *having the ability of* reflective reasoning is the main source of bearing moral responsibility. I consider this difference as a crucial one, because a serious disadvantage of the Frankfurtian view follows from

* This paper was supported by the János Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund number K109638.

1 For instance Zimmerman 2000, Salles 2001, 2005.

2 Frankfurt 1969, 1971, 1988.

3 *Pace* Zimmerman 2000.

it. At the end of the day, if one commits to the Frankfurtian view, one cannot attribute moral responsibility to those agents who *have the ability to* exercise reflective reason but *do not exercise* it in a particular case. Since these cases are very common, this leads to the point that the Frankfurtian should take a revisionist position regarding our everyday moral practices. And this would be a failure of the theory, given that every compatibilists theory of moral responsibility aims to be as non-revisionist as possible with regard to everyday moral practices.

1. The difference between the Stoics' and Frankfurt's theory of free will

David Zimmermann is one of those scholars of Stoics and Frankfurt who believes that there is a striking similarity between their concepts of free will. He puts it as follows:

> I have this worry about Harry Frankfurt's theory of free will, autonomous agency and moral responsibility, for there is a very plausible argument to the effect that aspects of his view commit him to a version of the late Stoic thesis that acting freely is a matter of 'making do', that is, of bringing oneself to be motivated to act in accordance with the feasible, so that personal liberation can be achieved by resigning and adapting oneself to necessity.[4]

Later, because he found this worry to be grounded, he proposed a solution to Frankfurt. He claimed that Frankfurt should introduce some historical conditions, in order to evade the conclusion that one can and should liberate himself to acquire the freedom of the will in cases of coercion through accepting coercion calmly as something that is necessary.

There are two problems. One is that Frankfurt actually embraces a view that has an aspect which can be considered as historical. In his approach, a second-order desire can be formed only by exercising reason reflectively. So, by definition, the concept of second-order desire is historical in a sense, because second-order desires necessarily have a specific kind of history. But I will investigate this issue in more detail later.

The second is that Zimmerman does not separate the issue of autonomy, responsibility on the one hand, and the issue of free will on the other. Granted, in many contexts, this separation is not so crucial. For instance, most of contemporary moral philosophers seem to think that all of these concepts go hand in hand. However, both the Stoics and Frankfurt disagree with this. Or, at least, in agreement with contemporary semi-compatibilists, they claim that the problem of free will is relatively independent of (or should be independent of) the problem of moral responsibility.

4 Zimmermann 2000, 25.

Before I can start the analysis, I have to clarify a few terminological issues. The *contemporary* use of the term "free will" is ambiguous, and I believe that it is one of the reasons why many scholars misleadingly claimed that the Stoic and Frankfurtian concepts of free will are substantially similar to each other, whereas the truth is the contrary. Many contemporary philosophers consider the concept of "free will" as a term of art used to refer to the satisfaction of either all or some of the conditions of being morally responsible. For instance, Derk Pereboom defines the term "free will" in a way according to which any agent has free will if and only if she satisfies the control conditions of moral responsibility.[5] It is legitimate to define the term "free will" in this way, but one should bear in mind that many philosophers did not define "free will" by reference to the concept of moral responsibility. This fact is particularly relevant if one investigates the relation between Frankfurt's and the Stoics' concept of freedom of the will, given that neither of them used the term "free will" in this responsibility-related way.

Both Frankfurt and the Stoics, starting with Epictetus, refer to a psychological capacity by using the term "free will". However, from this point of view, it instantly seems to be evident that they call different psychological capacities "free will". Epictetus, who is the one that introduced this concept, explains freedom of the agent and her will in the following way.

> He is free who lives as he wishes to live; who is neither subject to compulsion nor to hindrance, nor to force; whose movements to action are not impeded, whose desires attain their purpose, and who does not fall into that which he would avoid. […] What then is that makes a man free from hindrance and makes him his own master? […] I have never been hindered in my will nor compelled when I did not will. And how is this possible? I have placed my movements toward action in obedience to God. […] [W]hatever God wills, man also shall will; and what God does not will, a man also shall not will. […] Diogenes was free. How was he free? – not because he was born of free parents, but because he was himself free, because he had cast off all the handles of slavery, and it was not possible […] to enslave him.[6]

In accordance with the above quote, Michael Frede sums up Epictetus' view on free will as follows:

> So here we have our first actual notion of a free will. It is a notion of a will such that there is no power or force in the world which could prevent it from making the choices one needs to make to live a good life or force it to make choices which would prevent us from living a good life. But it is a notion such that not all human beings in fact have

5 Pereboom 2014, 2.
6 *Diss*. 4. 1.

> a free will. They are all meant by nature to have a free will, that is, each human being is capable of having a free will. But human beings become compulsive about things and thus lose their freedom. Hence only the wise person has a free will.[7]

Both quotes are clear in this regard, but I would like to stress again that this Stoic notion of free will is very exclusivist. Only the sage, the wise person has such will that is perfectly unforced by external forces. This will is determined only by the wise person's reflective insights about which action serves the good in the most effective way in the given situation. Other agents' will is partly the result of the influence of external forces. because their will is a *slave* to different external objects. That is, the foolish person's will is influenced not only by the person's reflective view on the good but by other factors as well.

In contrast, Frankfurt's notion of free will is inclusive in the sense that most mentally healthy people have it in most cases.[8] Let us see Frankfurt's definition of free will:

> A person's will is free only if he is free to have the will he wants. This means that, with regard to any first order desires, he is free either to make that desire his will or to make some other first-order desire his will instead. Whatever this will, then, the will of the person whose will is free could have been otherwise; he could have done otherwise than to constitute his will as he did. […] In illustration, take a third kind of addict. Suppose that his addiction [is basically irresistible] but he is delighted with his condition. He is a willing addict, who would not have things any other way. If the grip of the addiction should somehow weaken, he would do whatever to reinstate it […]. The willing addict will is not free, for his desire to take the drug will be effective regardless of whether or not he wants this desire to constitute his will.[9]

Of course, if someone is not an addict, she will not take the drug if she does not want to act on the basis of the desire for the drug. So, it seems that most people have free will in most cases, because they can act on the basis of the desire they regard the most appropriate one. Unlike the Stoic notion of free will, Frankfurtian free will has nothing to do with the actual origin of the will. Rather, it is based on a contrafactual dependence between first-order will and the second-order desire of the agent. Insofar as an agent has free will, the content of the second-order desire of the agent will determine

7 Frede 2011, 77.

8 Frankfurt calls "wanton" those beings who can deliberate and decide but cannot have free will, because they do not have second-order desires and wants. However, according to Frankfurt, humans have free will in most cases since they are capable of acting in accordance with their second and first order desires. I am grateful for the anonyme reviewer who pointed out me the relevance of the notion of wanton with regard to free will.

9 Frankfurt 1971, 19.

the content of the first-order will, provided that the content of the second-order desire is different to the actual one.

In sum, the Stoic notion of free will is exclusivist and it concerns the object and the origin thereof, while the Frankfurtian concept of the freedom of the will is inclusivist and based on contrafactual dependence between first-order and second-order mental states. On the basis of Frankfurt's theory, one should say that most people exercise free will day by day. In contrast, a Stoic has to conclude that most people do not exercise free will during their lifetime, even if they were able to develop the ability of having free will. It seems that there are only two relevant similarities between the two concepts. Neither of them is a necessary condition of moral responsibility and neither implies that the agent could have done otherwise in the sense that would be incompatible with determinism.

2. Two theories of moral responsibility

Since both theories claim that free will is not a necessary condition of moral responsibility, both of them fall into the category of a semi-compatibilist theory in contemporary terms. Clearly, both theories are compatibilist as well, since they claim that free will and determinism are compatible. But the compatibility of moral responsibility and determinism are explained by the fact that the causal efficiency of reflective reason is compatible with determinism, not by the fact that free will is compatible with determinism. Thus, Frankfurt and the standard Stoic theory of moral responsibility claim that the main source of moral responsibility is reflective reason. So, contrary to their theories of free will, their theories of moral responsibility have not only superficial but deep similarities.

This similarity is so striking that a recognized scholar of Stoic views of moral responsibility claimed that even if some minor dissimilarities can be found between Frankfurt's and the Chrysippean theory of responsibility, they are substantially the same. Ricardo Salles puts it as follows:

> Frankfurt and Chrysippus explain moral responsibility by appealing to factors that are substantially the same. In Frankfurt's theory, the responsibility for the action derives from the agent's decision to perform it, but also from that decision's being based on a previous all-things-considered practical reflection. Similarly, the responsibility for the action in Chrysippus derives from the agent's exercise of an impulse for it (or his assenting to the impression where the action is presented as valuable), but also, and crucially, from the impulse's being fully rational, which involves a reflection concerning the all-things-considered desirability or appropriateness of the action. […] [The Frankfurtian theory's

> focus] is a desire – whether or not one should have it. In the Chrysippean account, by contrast, the focus of the reflection is on action. […] This difference between the two authors, however, is only superficial. Under logical analysis, the two kinds of reflection emerge as mutually equivalent.[10]

I agree with Salles about the fact that, from the perspective of the issue of moral responsibility, it is not a crucial difference between the two approaches that Frankfurt focuses on desires instead of actions, as Chrysippus did. However, I claim that there is a relevant difference between the two approaches regarding the role of reflexivity.

In order to show this difference, firstly I shall sum up the standard Stoic view on moral responsibility. I regard the core of Chrysippus' theory of moral responsibility as the standard Stoic view, given that all Stoic theories of moral responsibility can be considered as a further elaboration or modification of it. Since my aim is not to give a novel approach to the interpretation of the Chrysippus' theory of moral responsibility but to merely summarize it, I will rely on recent accounts of this theory.[11]

To see why reflective reason is the main basis of moral responsibility, it is worth starting by summarizing the main difference between humans and animals in the view of Chrysippus. According to him, animals' behaviour is controlled by their impulsive impressions. Impulsive impressions such mental events with practically relevant content. If a cat is hungry and sees a basin full of milk, the perception of the basin will result in a representation of the basin that contains the proposition according to which the milk in the basin is desirable. This representation is an impulsive impression, given that it is rooted in some kind of perception and it has practical content. Furthermore, the cat is not able to override the propositional content of this impulsive impression, except for the case when she perceives another impulsive impression that represents the basin as avoidable in the given circumstances. By contrast, humans as rational agents have the capacity of reasoning and reflecting, because their souls are constituted by reason. Humans perceive impulsive impressions basically the same way as animals do, but they are able to give their assent or not give it to the propositional content of the impulsive impression in question. If the agent gives her assent to the propositional content, it means that the agent confirms the content of the impulsive impressions and she tries to act on the basis of this content. Insofar as she withholds her assent, she does not confirm the content and she will not act on the basis of the impulsive impressions in question.[12]

Since the reaction to the impulsive impression is not so automatic in the case of a human agent as is in the case of an animal, the agent who has the capacity of reason

10 Salles 2005, 66.
11 Especially Bobzien 1998, Salles 2005.
12 Bobzien 1998, 240.

has a chance to carefully *reflect* on whether the propositional content of the impression is valid all things considered. Granted, even a human agent who is thirsty and likes milk gets a vivid impulsive impression if she perceives a glass of milk, but she is able to reflect on whether the action of drinking a glass of milk is a good idea in light of every relevant considerations She is able to decide whether drinking milk is healthy, useful, etc. Humans are, in principle, able to withhold their assent until they consider all relevant aspects of the practical issue; moreover, they are able to act on the basis of the result of reflecting on what is best all things considered. So, whether the agent either withholds her assent or gives it, her innermost activity is an indispensable causal source of action, and therefore, she is morally responsible for it.

Note that every adult human being has, *in principle*, the *ability* to reflect on the rightness of the content of her impulsive impression. However, it does not mean either that every human exercises this ability of reflection in every case, or that everyone is *actually* and not only *in principle* able to reflect on such things. In cases of hasty action, although the agent would be able to reflect on the all-things-considered value of her act, she does not exercise this ability. A drunken person is in principle able to reflect on the general values of her action, but she is not able to do this, due to the fact that her rational capacities are impaired.

Now, one could argue that insofar as someone is not responsible for the fact that her character is such that it does not motivate reflectivity in many cases, the agent is not responsible for the fact that she does not recognize the wrongness of her acts on these occasions. Moreover, she is not responsible for the wrong act in question. However, Chrysippus has a famous argumentation that explains how an agent may be responsible for something, even if the whole sequence of events is set in motion by external factors. Gellius reports Chrysippus' train of thought in the following way:

> **(1)** Against this [the objection that Stoic "fate" is inconsistent with the condemnation of wrongdoing] Chrysippus has many subtle and acute arguments, but virtually all his writings on the issue make the following point. "Although it is true", he says, "that all things are enforced and linked through fate by a certain necessary and primary rationale, nevertheless our minds' own degree of regulation by fate depends on their peculiar quality. **(2)** For if our minds' initial natural make-up is a healthy and beneficial one, all that external force exerted upon them as a result of fate slides over them fairly smoothly and without obstruction. But if they are coarse, ignorant, inept, and unsupported by education, then even if they are under little or no pressure from fated disadvantages, they still, through their own ineptitude and voluntary impulse, plunge themselves into continual wrongdoings and transgressions. **(3)** And the very fact that it runs out this way is the product of that natural and necessary sequence of things called "fate". For it is in itself a virtually fated and sequential rule that bad minds should not be without

> wrongs and transgressions. **(4)** He then uses an illustration of this fact which is fairly appropriate and appealing. "Just as", he says, "if you push a stone cylinder on steeply sloping ground, you have produced the cause and beginning of its forward motion, but soon it rolls forward not because you are still making it do so, but because such are its form and smooth-rolling shape so too the order, rationale and necessity of fate sets in motion the actual types of causes and their beginnings, but the deliberative impulses of our minds and our actual actions are controlled by our own individual will and intellect. (5) In accordance with this he then says (and these are his actual words): "Hence the Pythagoreans are right to say: You will learn that men have chosen their own troubles", meaning that the harm they suffer lies in each individual's own hands, and that it is in accordance with their impulse and their own mentality and character that they go wrong.[13]

The point is that even if the whole course of events was necessary due to the chain of causes and the effects of external forces set in motion the whole sequence, the mind of the agent and its activity were the direct and main cause that the agent decided in the wrong way. As Susanne Bobzien[14] sums it up, even if one is not responsible for those character traits that prevent her from deciding to reflect on a particular situation, she is morally responsible for either the lack of reflection and the hasty action, because her soul with reason was the one which gave the assent of the impulsive impression to act without reflecting on the possible alternatives.

Epictetus complemented this reply in a remarkable way.[15] According to him, human agents are responsible for their actions, because they are not only in principle *able to* reflect on the overall value of their possible actions, but they *should* do it as well. This is because, as Chrysippus claimed, every genuine human action is produced by the reason of the agent. However, human agents' nature constituted by the fact that they have reason and the very nature of reason is that it is capable of reflecting on practical and theoretical issues. And, as Epictetus argues that everything *should* behave in accordance with its nature, it follows from this that agents who possess reason *should reflect* on those practical and theoretical issues that they face. As Epictetus puts in the *Discourses*.

> Well then God constitutes every animal, one to be eaten, another to serve agriculture, another to supply cheese, and another to some like use; for which purposes what need is there to understand appearances and to be able to distinguish them? But God has introduced man to be a spectator of God and his works; and not only a spectator of

13 Gellius 7.2.6–13 = *SVF* 2.1000, part; cited and translated in *LS* 61.
14 Bobzien 1998, 290–301.
15 Salles 2005, 97–101.

> them, but an interpreter. For this reason it is shameful for man to begin and to end where irrational animals do; but rather he ought to begin where they begin, and end where nature ends with us; and nature ends in contemplation and understanding, and in a way of life conformable to nature.[16]

Moreover, due to the fact that in the cases of beings with reason the main cause of the action is the way how the agent exercises her reason, it is up to the agent whose nature is defined by reason whether she does what she should or not. Therefore, the agents who have reflective reason are morally responsible for their acts because these acts are up to these agents.

Ultimately, this approach claims that moral responsibility is based on the fact that morally responsible agents cause their acts appropriately by their way of exercising reason. They are appropriate targets of moral appraisal or disdain, because they should exercise their reason in a reflective and proper way, even if they failed to do so.

If one investigates Frankfurt's theory of responsibility superficially, this approach seems to be radically different from this point of view. I stressed that the standard Stoic theory of responsibility claims that agents are morally responsible for their acts, because their reason is the source of their actions. But the well-spread view on Frankfurt's theory is that it does not consider the source of the action as a relevant issue with regards to moral responsibility. Frankfurt's hierarchical account is categorized as a non-historical theory of responsibility, because the relation between the action in question and the content of the agent's second-order desire is relevant, not because these second-order desires may be the sources of the action.

As in Franfkurt's well-known examples, both the willing addict and the unwilling addict are psychologically determined to take the drug by their first-order desires, but only the willing addict is morally responsible for taking the drug, because only his second-order desire fits the action. The willing addict is not only addicted, but he desires that his desire for the drug determines his action. In contrast, the unwilling addict desires that his desire for the drug disappears and does not determine his actions. This exempts him from being morally responsible although his action to take the drug was rooted in his first-order desire the same way as the willing addict's action was rooted in his first-order desire to take it. Thus, the second-order desires are causes of the agents' actions in neither case. So, even if second-order desires can be the sources and causes of action, this fact is not the most relevant regarding moral responsibility. If the content of the second-order desire and the action in question fit each other, it is irrelevant form the aspect of responsibility whether the second-order desire is the cause of the action or not.

16 *Diss.* 1. 16. 18.

However, if someone pays attention to Frankfurt's notion of second-order desires, it will be clear that there is a notable historical factor in his approach. This is because, according to Frankfurt, a desire can be a second-order desire only if it has been created in a particular way. Frankfurt characterizes second-order desires as follows:

> Now what leads people to form desires of higher orders is similar to what leads them to go over their arithmetic. Someone checks his calculations because he thinks he may have done them wrong. It may be that there is a conflict between the answer he has obtained and a different answer, which one reason or another, he believes may be correct; or perhaps he has merely a more generalized suspicion to the effect that he may have made some kind of error. Similarly, a person may be led to reflect on his own desires either because they conflict with each other or because a more general lack of confidence moves him to consider whether to be satisfied with his motives as they are.[17]

The historical aspect of this train of thought is that second-order desires have to be formed by reflecting on first-order desires. If it is formed in a different way, it is not a second-order desire after all. Given that without having second-order desires no one is able to be morally responsible for anything, it is not an exaggeration to say that reflecting on the person's desires and motivational background is a necessary historical condition of being morally responsible, according to Frankfurt. At the end of the day, reflective reason is the main source of moral responsibility in Frankfurt's approach as well as in the standard Stoic theory of moral responsibility.

I regard this similarity between the two theories as the most notable one. Both of them are reflectivity-based theories of moral responsibility. This similarity is the source of all of the other relevant similarities. For instance, both approaches are compatibilist with reference to moral responsibility, because they consider reflective reason as the main basis of moral responsibility and having and exercising reflective reason seems to be possible even in a deterministic world. And, neither Frankfurt, nor the Stoics claim that having free will is a necessary condition of moral responsibility because, in different ways, both of them consider free will as a highly effective form of exercising reflective reason. However, neither of them think that this great effectiveness could be a condition of moral responsibility, a very common phenomenon.

Nonetheless, the main difference between the two theories can be found at this point as well. Although both approaches tie moral responsibility to reflective reason, they do it in different ways. In the next section, I clarify this difference and why this difference has very remarkable consequences with regards to which theory can be considered to be more plausible than the other one.

17 Frankfurt 1998, 169.

3. The very source of moral responsibility – exercising reflectivity versus the capacity of reflection

According to Frankfurt, as the last quotation suggests, one reflects on the desires and different practical issues only if she is motivated in a proper way. For instance, if someone thinks that her calculation has to be perfect from every possible aspect, she will not reflect on whether her calculation was correct, because it would make no sense to do so from her perspective. Similarly, if one does not perceive a single reason to think that she should reflect on whether her desires have a good object, she will not reflect on this issue and will not form second-order desires with reference to them.

The Stoics agree. Before acting, in most cases, a hasty person does not reflect on whether the action which seems to be the best one at first glance is actually the best one, because her character traits, desires and beliefs do not motivate her to do so. In contrast, the sage will always reflect on what she *should* reflect on, because she is motivated by proper character traits, desires, beliefs and so on.

Nevertheless, the Stoics would not like it if the hasty person who does not exercise his ability to reflect on her possible options was off the hook. Partly this is why they claim that if reason has a causal role in producing the action, the agent is responsible for it regardless of whether she exercises reason in a reflective way. Thus, the hasty person is morally responsible for her hasty action because her reason was the one which gave assent to the impulsive impression according to which the aim of the action is a very desirable. Furthermore, the fact that she did not exercise her reason in a reflective way does not change that reflexivity is the very nature of reason; consequently, she should have exercised it in a reflective way.

The problem is that Frankfurt does not have a similarly detailed explanation of how agents who do not exercise their reflective capacity regarding a particular action can be morally responsible for the action in question. Insofar as the agent does not have a second-order desire, the action and the second-order desire cannot fit each other. However, this proper relation between second-order desire and action is the necessary condition of moral responsibility in the Frankfurtian approach.

Let us see a more detailed example which points toward this difficulty.

> Richard the boss
>
> Richard has a weird habit. If he sees a particularly beautiful flower, he rips one or a few petals off the plant. This action is based on a fairly strong desire because he acts in this way even if there are people around him. However, for many-many years, nobody criticized him openly for this, partly because Richard is a powerful man who is a boss of a great company. This and Richard's main characteristic traits explain that Richard has never reflected on his desire for ripping petals off flowers. But, one day, an old man saw when Richard ravaged a flower and openly blamed him for it, because he did not fear Richard at all.

The problem is that Richard seems to be morally responsible for his weird habit even though he does not have a second-order desire constituting his habit. One could say that there is no conflict between a second-order desire and the action in question either, and this is sufficient for it to be morally responsible. But Frankfurt has good reason to deny this. He thinks that the lack of second-order desires can explain why animals are not the typical objects of attributing responsibility.[18] Indeed, if the lack of conflict between second-order desires and the action would be sufficient for being morally responsible, it would be difficult to explain why dogs and other beings are not morally responsible for their actions within a Frankfurtian framework.

Note that the Stoic is able to explain why Richard is morally responsible and deserves blame for his weird habit. The Stoic could argue that Richard gave his assent to his impulsive impression without reflecting on whether doing this is a good idea or not; consequently, he caused his action in such a way that it was up to him as a person with reason whether he gave his assent or not. Moreover, he should reflect on this issue, considering that he as a person who has reason has a nature which should manifest by exercising reflective capacities.

One could say that the advantage of the Stoic view is only apparent because the Stoic answer relies on an implausible metaphysical assumption. Namely the fact that someone having a particular nature could be the very source of any kind of responsibility and obligation.

I think this argument fails for two reasons. The first is that if one theory has a solution to a problem on the basis of implausible metaphysical assumptions, and another theory has no solution to the same problem at all then the first one is better considering the problem in question. It can turn out either that the metaphysical assumption is not so implausible as it seemed at first glance, or that the cost of the metaphysical assumption is less than the price of having a relevant unsolved philosophical problem. The second reason is that, as I see it, the implausibility of the claim that having some kind of nature can be grounds for responsibility and obligations seems to be implausible to a contemporary reader, mainly because we do not prefer using the term "nature" in this ethical context. However, the Stoic view regarding responsibility and obligations could be rephrased without relying on the term "nature" or embracing the whole related metaphysics of the Stoics. Someone who embraces only the *ethical* views of the Stoics could say that having a capacity may be grounds for particular responsibilities and obligations. Furthermore, she could point out that having the capacity of reflective reason can plausibly provide the grounds for responsibilities and obligations because this capacity is the main condition of an agent being able to recognize and apply these practical ideas in particular situations.

18 Frankfurt 1971.

Another objection could be that the Stoic approach has a rather similar difficulty, insofar as they have to explain why people are not responsible in cases of serious psychological coercion. Frankfurt's example of the unwilling addict poses such a challenge to the Stoic view.

> [The unwilling addict] hates his addiction and always struggles desperately, although to no avail, against its thrust. He tries everything that he thinks might enable him to overcome his desires for the drug. But these desires are too powerful for him to withstand, and invariably, in the end, they conquer him. He is an unwilling addict, helplessly violated by his own desires.[19]

It is worth adding that one may stipulate, insofar as she considers it a relevant issue, that the unwilling addict is not responsible for being an addict. Now, the question is how the Stoic can stick to the plausible intuition according to which the unwilling addict is not morally responsible and blameworthy for taking the drug. Even though the question is interesting, there is an obvious solution for the Stoic. First, the Stoic could argue that she does not accept the assumption that the behavior of the unwilling addict is an action. According to the Stoic approach, the source of human action is always the activity of reason. At least, the person has to give assent to an impulsive impression in order to act in one way or another. It is reasonable to suppose that, in the case of the unwilling addict, the behavior is produced without giving assent to an impulsive impression, because the unwilling addict would not like to do that. Furthermore, it is very probable that the Stoic would also argue that, similarly to other cases of *akrasia*, the unwilling addict oscillates between the two alternatives without being aware of the oscillation, and due to the overwhelming impression coming from the pleasure of drugs, he goes for them.[20] However, insofar as the opponent of the Stoic claims that the unwilling addict gave assent to the impulsive impression according to which taking the drug is desirable, the Stoic is able to bite the bullet, because the original description of the example suggested the opposite, and the original intuition (which said that the protagonist was not responsible) was about the original formulation of the case.

If it is the case with the Stoic, why could not Frankfurt bite bullet and deny the intuition that Richard the boss is not morally responsible for ripping the petals off the plant? The reason is that one of the main motivations of compatibilists theories of moral responsibility is to be as non-revisionist regarding our responsibility practices as it is possible. But cases that are similar to the story of Richard are very common. People do not reflect on many of their desires and their actions are often based on such desires.

19 Frankfurt 1971, 12.

20 I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer who pointed out this argumentative strategy.

Consequently, if Frankfurt claimed that agents are not responsible in all of these cases, it would result in a clearly revisionist theory of moral responsibility.

Conclusion

Even though I argued that the Frankfurtian and Stoic notions of free will are dissimilar to each other, I echoed the well-spread view that these approaches have alike views on moral responsibility. More specifically, I claimed that both approaches claim that the main source of moral responsibility is reflective reason, and this similarity explains why both of them are semi-compatibilists with regard to moral responsibility. Nevertheless, I pointed out that there is a relevant difference. On the one hand, the Stoic theory of moral responsibility claims that moral responsibility is rooted in the *capacity* of reflective reasoning. On the other hand, Frankfurt regards the *exercise* of reflective reason as the ultimate basis for being morally responsible. This difference is relevant indeed because Frankfurt, in contrast to the Stoics, is not able to explain why agents are responsible for their actions in cases that the agent acts on the basis of a first-order desire on which she has never reflected. Thus, the Frankfurtian theory results in a revisionist theory of moral responsibility that flies in the face of one of the main motivations of all compatibilist theories of moral responsibility. Consequently, if one believes that the main source of moral responsibility is reflective reason, I suggest that she embraces the idea according to which it is not the exercise but the capacity of reflectivity that is the ultimate ground for moral responsibility – as the Stoics did over a thousand years ago.

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